Review: Oxyd Magnum

by Kevin Savetz

IMG Rating: 4 4 4 4

Type	Puzzle
Publisher	Dongleware Publishing (800-228-6993)
Retail Price	$59.95
Street Price	$38.00
Requires	System 6.0.1 or later, 1MB RAM, color or black-and-white display
Protection	None

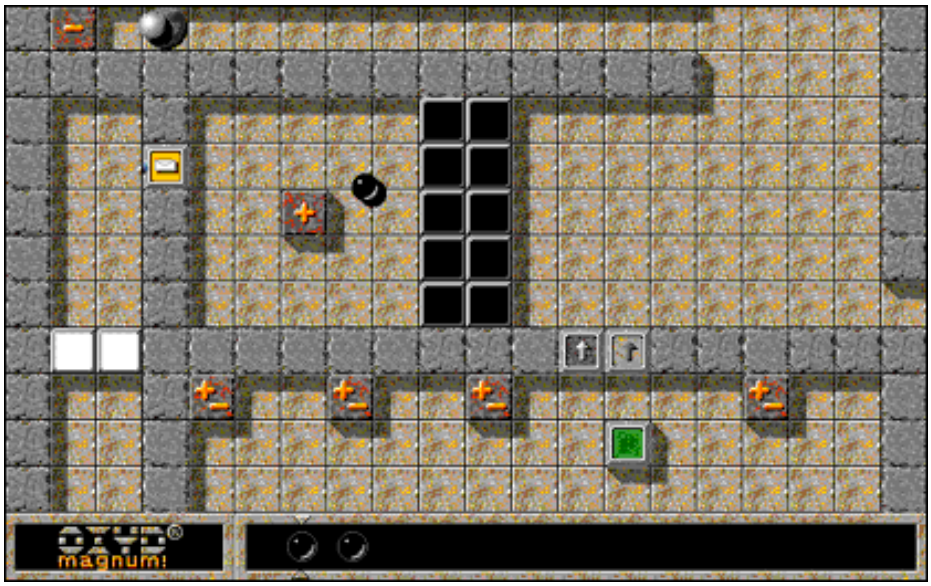
Archival reconstruction from the original Inside Mac Games electronic magazine. Text, styling cues, and artwork were extracted from the original Macintosh resources; the flowing PDF layout is new. Source: June 1994 back issue preserved on the January/February 1995 CD-ROM.

There's an unwritten rule in life (well, it was unwritten until now) that a sequel is never quite as good as the original. Think of The Empire Strikes Back, Mighty Ducks II, Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, Nightmare on Elm Street II, Adams Family Values, and The Return of Jafar…I could go on and on, but I think you'll agree that the rule is mostly true — it applies equally well to movies, books and software.

It does not, however, apply to Oxyd Magnum, an addictive menace of a game that is every bit as challenging as its predecessor, Oxyd.

If you enjoyed the original, you'll also like Oxyd Magnum. The game is essentially identical to the first — you use the mouse to guide a marble through 100 treacherous puzzles. Your goal is to find pairs of colored boxes, called Oxyds. Touching an Oxyd reveals its color: you must reveal Oxyds of the same color sequentially (for instance, you must reveal two orange Oxyds in a row in order) to "match" them, sometimes going through hoops — and around quicksand and over cliffs — to do so.

Fiendish puzzles stand between you and your goal of revealing Oxyds in the right order. The puzzles require careful thought, practice and a fair amount of marble maneuvering dexterity to complete.



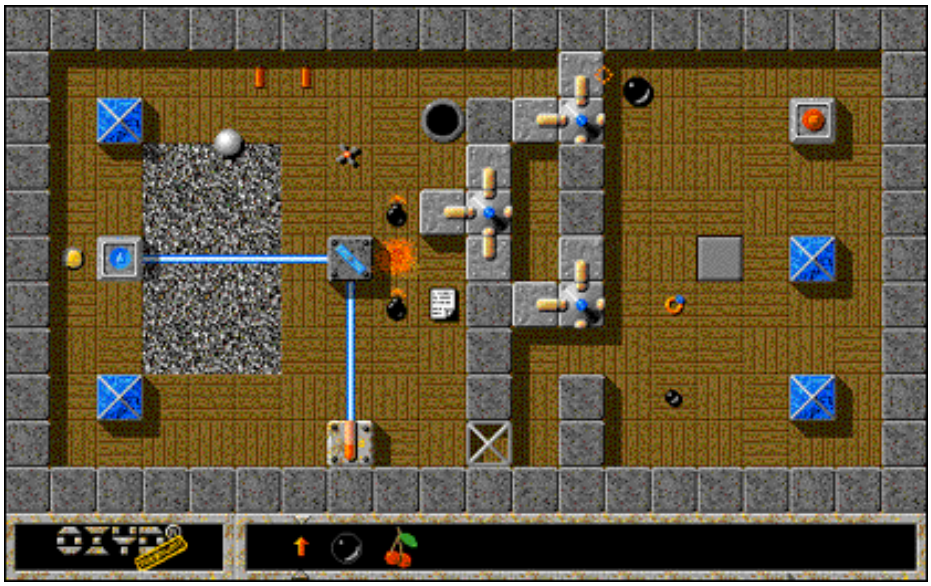
Original artwork embedded with this review.

You view each landscape from above — as the marble rolls around the floor, picking up objects, bumping into obstacles and revealing Oxyds — you must learn the purpose of various objects and terrain. You'll find yourself asking yourself things like "What does that spring do?" and "Just how do I control the marble on the checkered floor?" Learning the purpose of the devices is half the fun (until your last marble sinks into the grey murk for the third time.)

When you sink into the murk, all is not lost. Happily, each level is accompanied by a code — entering that code will let you start again where you left off.

If you're familiar with the original Oxyd, you'll be able to jump (roll?) right into the puzzles — game play is the same as in the original. Although you certainly don't need to have played the first Oxyd to enjoy Magnum, I found that the puzzles in this game become more difficult more quickly than in the earlier Oxyd. (I suspect this will mean a steeper learning curve for first-time Oxyd players.) There are also many new playing pieces — gadgets that to help and hinder your explorations.

Oxyd Magnum also throws in new conceptual elements — for instance, some levels contain two marbles — a black one and a white one — which can be controlled independently, one at a time, by the player. Both marbles must work together to complete the level. On other levels, you must control multiple marbles simultaneously, taking care that they do not touch.



Original artwork embedded with this review.

Every tenth level is a Meditation Landscape, annoying little diversions that differ from regular game play. Meditation Landscapes don't have Oxyds to uncover or puzzles to solve — instead you must guide little green marbles (actually, they look like peas) into divots in the floor. These landscapes are frustrating, but seem to be less so than the meditations in the original Oxyd.

The original Oxyd had 100 regular levels as well as 100 additional levels that could be played by two users over a network. Oxyd Magnum lacks the network mode, so you're left... um, playing with yourself. You can play with English, German or French text. The first time you play, the game text is in German. If you don't speak German, you might be confused until you discover the command for switching to English.

Playing the original Oxyd was thwarted by a vile book of codes. Frequently throughout the game, you'd have to consult the book and enter secret codes. No more in Oxyd Magnum. In fact, there's no copy protection at all. Yay. When you get frustrated, you can consult the included book of hints or (one night a week) call the help line (the only charge is the call to Massachusetts).

If you enjoy puzzles and don't frustrate easily, Oxyd Magnum is a great diversion. The old rule about sequels doesn't hold true: If you enjoyed the first Oxyd, you'll also enjoy Oxyd Magnum.

Pros

- Perfect game for puzzle-solvers
- No copy protection
- Hint book and free help line included
- Can play in English, German or French

Cons

- Can be frustrating
- Gets difficult faster than Oxyd: steeper learning curve for new players
- No network play mode